

Subject: Re: Crest Creek Craggs trail situation
From: "Smith, Andy B ENV:EX" <Andy.Smith@gov.bc.ca>
Date: 1/25/2017 4:29 PM
To: David Baar <climbing@davebaar.com>
CC: "Miller, Aaron W ENV:EX" <Aaron.Miller@gov.bc.ca>

David - I'm back at work again and can now respond to any questions.

Aaron has confirmed that we have, and still, care about Crest Creek Craggs, as do many others. Unfortunately, while there is interest in forming another group to look after Crest Creek climbing area, people have been reluctant until it is confirmed that the Heathens are no longer involved (don't want to get in the middle of anything). Having said that, we have been approached by the Climbers Access Society who would like to help form or facilitate another group taking over maintenance of the area. Strathcona Park Lodge have also indicated they may be willing to facilitate a volunteer agreement if there is support from the climbing community (they don't want to appear to be taking over things and would rather be invited by the climbing community).

To clarify, BC Parks was never opposed to the Heathens continuing to maintain the area and have said so many times. This issue stems from the fact that the Heathens would not commit to signing any volunteer agreements which confirmed what they could and could not do in the park without prior approval. Even with that said, we supported the maintenance of any existing trails and facilities, only restricting additional pre-approval on any new trail or facility development. All work in a park must be authorized by law (Park Act) which we were going to provide via a volunteer agreement. As the legal stewards of the park, BC Parks is required to maintain control over what does and doesn't happen in the park and don't feel it is unreasonable to have a group who wish to work in the park, agreeing to required parameters of this work. However, after several years of being patient and trying to gain compliance, trying to find ways to address and meet agreement wording concerns with Heathen reps, work continued while ignoring our requests. As a result our Regional Director was finally forced to issue a letter advising that all work must cease without pre-authorization.

Only one season has gone by since the Heathens were advised to cease all work and due to some other issues in the area last summer, BC Parks and others in the climbing community have been restricted in moving forward to improve the situation. We have also been discussing the development of a Climbers Steering Committee with our Public Advisory Committee. Such a committee would be made up of reps from the Climbing community as well as key agency reps who would help guide any work at Crest Creek as well as provide input into issues associated with climbing generally. We are optimistic that with the help of the many enthusiastic and cooperative people who care about the Craggs area, that things will improve in the future.

Andy Smith
Strathcona Area Supervisor
BC Parks, West Coast Region
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Andy.smith@gov.bc.ca

-----Original Message-----

From: David Baar [<mailto:climbing@davebaar.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 5:10 PM
To: Miller, Aaron W ENV:EX; Smith, Andy B ENV:EX
Subject: Re: *RESEND DUE TO APPARENT NON-RESPONSE* Re: Crest Creek Craggs trail

situation

Thanks very much, Aaron, for the reply and the connection to Andy.

Andy, please let me know when you are back from holiday; perhaps we can do a phone call or meet in person soon. As I said in my first message to Aaron, I'm new to being a resident in this area, but have spent a lot of time adventuring/climbing here and elsewhere in BC over the past decades. I've met some of the people involved in Crest Creek to date, mainly from climbing near them; I know a bit of the history of Crest Creek Crags from their viewpoint but have not been involved in that personally.

Best regards,
David Baar
Campbell River, BC
250-914-3436

On 1/11/2017 3:35 PM, Miller, Aaron W ENV:EX wrote:

Hi David:

Thank you for your email, and I apologize for not getting back to you sooner. Yes, you are correct that BC Parks ultimately has responsibility for Crest Crags and Strathcona Park as we are the land owner on behalf of the Province. You have summarized the situation quite well as far as where we are at. BC Parks would like to work with a volunteer group to continue to manage and maintain the Crest Crags area and we share your concerns about the facilities and potential to degrade over time without adequate maintenance.

I have cc'ed Andy Smith as he is the Area Supervisor who is responsible for the day to day management of Strathcona, and other Parks, in the region. He has been the main contact for BC Parks and climbing at Crest Crags for many years and has the history and more detailed knowledge of the facilities in the area than I do. Andy is on holidays currently, but will be back next week and I will have him follow up with you directly as he has had conversations with various individuals who have concerns about the area, as well as those that may be interested in assisting in the maintenance of Crest Crags.

Thanks,

Aaron Miller
Section Head, BC Parks, Central Coast/North Island Ministry of
Environment BC Parks and Conservation Officer Service Division
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Toll Free: 1 800 663-7867

-----Original Message-----

From: David Baar [<mailto:climbing@davebaar.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2016 3:35 PM
To: Miller, Aaron W ENV:EX
Subject: ***RESEND DUE TO APPARENT NON-RESPONSE*** Re: Crest Creek Crags trail situation

On 11/24/2016 5:47 PM, David Baar wrote:

Hello, Aaron Miller.

This message is in regard to BC Parks' intentions and plans for the trails and rock climbing routes at the well known Crest Creek Crags climbing area in Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island. If I understand your role correctly, you and your department have oversight responsibilities for that area.

I'm one of many active climbers at Crest Creek Crags. I am an Engineering Physicist by education, semi-retired now. My wife (a biologist, and also a climber) and I moved to the Campbell River area four years ago for a quieter life -in my case after many hectic years as founder and senior executive in technology companies in Vancouver. Prior to that, we had frequently climbed and adventured in Strathcona Park, including Crest Creek Crags, on holidays during the past 15+ years. Strathcona Park and the outdoor recreation opportunities it presents, including climbing at Crest Creek Crags, are among the main reasons that we moved here. I am also a long time member of the BC Climbers Access Society, and several of my friends are involved in trail and access issues in other areas in BC.

I've travelled to many climbing and hiking areas in North America, Europe, and Asia. To me, the trails at Crest Creek Crags in their prime state a few years ago stood out as among the best in the world for the quality and workmanship of the trails, and the care and effort taken in building and maintaining them using locally sourced materials and with attention to preserving natural features including plants and trees to the extent possible. In my own experience, which now spans more than 20 years of climbing, the Crest Creek Crags trails in their peak condition represented one of the finest, best built trail systems anywhere.

Unfortunately, from lack of maintenance recently along with the effects of severe weather and other causes, the trail systems at Crest Creek Crags are already in decline; some of the neglected trails already represent safety hazards due to sunken bridge sections and other problems that are inevitable on unmaintained trails regardless of the original quality. Obstructions due to trees apparently felled by BC Hydro employees or contractors also now partially or completely block several popular trails to climbing crags. There are no apparent recent efforts to maintain, repair, or clear those trails, and no local party is apparently authorized to work on them.

My understanding of the present situation in regard to Crest Creek Crags trail work is that the original group ("The Heathens"), who have been extensively involved in trail building and trail maintenance at Crest Creek Crags for many years, are no longer permitted to do trail and route maintenance activities due to inability to reach agreement between BC Parks and themselves as to the standards for the trails and re other activities. Whatever the cause of the disagreement(s), could you please let me know what you can in regard to BC Parks plans for the future upkeep of the Crest Creek Crags climbing area? How will this extraordinary, world class trail system be maintained? I'd also welcome any other comments that you or your colleagues at BC Parks might have on this matter.

Sincerely,
David Baar, Ph.D.
Campbell River, BC